1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

they had been called upon to pay a chena tax as well as 1·50 Rs. per adult male road tax. Of course they were unable to collect this money and they dreaded the ensuing penalty, that of serving on the roads, for should the two young men leave the settlement the old man and woman and the girl must starve, the first being too old to work and the woman a cripple. Their plight would have been just as bad had the young man gone to work on some Sinhalese rice fields in order to earn the money[1].

Degenerate Veddas in the neighbourhood of the main Badulla-Batticaloa road[2]. The main road from Badulla to the east coast passes through country that was once the centre of the Vedirata, and on either side of it at a distance of some 2—6 miles are various settlements of half-bred and degenerate Veddas who will soon be entirely lost among the Sinhalese. Plate XIV, figure 1, represents two men of this class: it is obvious that the young man would pass for a Sinhalese, indeed in spite of his bow and arrows and traditional scanty Vedda garb the condition of his hair shows that he has at least been following a Sinhalese mode of life. It is possible that the whole Vedda get-up may have been assumed for our benefit, though in view of the comparative skill with which he handled his bow we do not think this likely. The old man was doubtless one of the last degenerate Veddas of the district.

Before passing to village Veddas a word must be said concerning the Omuni folk and those of Unuwatura Bubula. Sir James Emerson Tennant, in his work *Ceylon* published in 1859, states that Mr Atherton, A.G.A., in conjunction with the Wesleyan Methodist Missionaries, attempted to civilise the Veddas[3]. In 1838 "cottages were built for them in their own district, rice land assigned to them, wells dug, coconuts planted, two communities were speedily settled at Vippammadvo." A

[1] This is a not uncommon practice at the present day.

[2] This road is only some forty or fifty years old, Mr Warren tells me that "the old road from Badulla to Batticaloa joined the road from Alutnuwara. It crossed the present cart road about Kalledi and must have worked its way in the neighbourhood of the present road to Tumpalaneholai and so to the ferry into Batticaloa." Part of this track is still used as a short cut. "There was another road from Passera through Madagama past Makakandiyaweva to Mandur; *dorihins* travel that way now."

[3] Tennant, *op. cit.* Vol. II, p. 447.

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

a surplus to barter with the Moormen on their annual visit, or to take into the nearest Sinhalese village to exchange for iron, cloth, pots and occasional rice and coconuts.

Plate XIII represents the women of this group, the plates on which the men were photographed were accidentally destroyed shortly after we left Sitala Wanniya. Handuna whose height was 1·530 m. (60¼ inches) looked a typical Vedda; Vela who was two inches taller also had a Vedda physiognomy though his appearance was not so typical; Kaira and Pema both looked as though they were of mixed blood, and Nila, height 1·555 m. (61¼ inches), shown in Plate LV, would certainly not be taken for a Vedda at all.

Neither the assurance of a regular supply of food, nor the apathy produced by gradual starvation, had caused them to neglect their old ceremonies, and we found that once these people had overcome their shyness they were communicative, extremely courteous and merry. When the men understood that areca nut and betel leaves were always ready for them, they granted us the same freedom of their own cave, only stipulating that we should never allow our servants to go near it.

When they first led us to their cave we noticed that they stopped and shouted when about a quarter of a mile distant and did not proceed until an answering shout was heard. This they said was their custom and was equally observed whether they were accompanied by strangers or not. The place at which they stopped was their usual dancing ground as well as the spot on which pedlars were received and barter carried on, for strangers were never allowed to approach their caves or see their women.

Galmede. A family of Veddas of the Galmede group, seen at Godatalawa, consisted of ten persons who had left their old home in the Nuwaragala Hills, and who appeared to be moderately pure-blooded. The old man of the community proved a good informant, remembering a considerable number of old customs and invocations, but he was not a shaman, and as there was not one in the community most of the customs had fallen into desuetude. The members of this community were living on a very poor chena and, when we saw them, were in great difficulties as

[Leeuwen; see p. xx. – Analyst]

1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-S (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

these village Veddas, though they seem to be of a somewhat morose disposition. He also said they take no interest in things unknown to them. However, the phonograph attracted as much attention and interest as it always had from Veddas and Sinhalese alike, and we distinctly saw one Vedda smile when his song was reproduced.

The chena settlement at Wallampelle was seen, but here it appeared that much intermarriage had taken place with the Sinhalese.

Malgoda. There are a number of people very mixed blooded, but calling themselves Veddas, living at Malgode on the shores of Horaborawewa, a beautiful tank traditionally associated with the Veddas. They have dropped their old Vedda customs so entirely that the local Sinhalese no longer look upon them as true village Veddas, an attitude that has perhaps been fostered by the fact that here in Uva where the Veddas are exempt from all taxation these people pay road tax. Such at least was the point of view of the Arachi of Alutnuwara, "how can these people be Veddas?—they pay road tax." In spite of this there is no doubt that they are largely of Vedda descent and in many instances remember their *warige*. They live in very poorly built houses and depend largely on the seeds of the lotus for food. They still pose as pure-blooded Veddas to white visitors, and have been recently described by Drs H. M. Hillier and W. H. Furness, 3rd. "We followed the jungle path along the eastern shore of the lake, sometimes over outcrops of granite, or down by the lake side...and after following our guide through thick undergrowth for half-an-hour, suddenly, and without warning, we came out into a cleared space, where there was the merest excuse for a hut, and beside it a man and woman squatting side by side and cooking something in a blackened earthen pot, which rested on a fire of twigs and branches; a little beyond them were more huts and more women and children—lo! the Village Veddahs. The elderly man and woman whom we first saw had between them scarcely a yard of coarse cloth as clothing, their hair hung loose in dishevelled twists and strings about their faces, and they both squatted so low that their knees stood up above their shoulders. But the most impressive thing about

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

Equally they were acquainted with tobacco and betel, for I was shown a place where the Veddas established a toll that was paid usually in these particular commodities. 276 [651]

The dog was the only domestic animal reared by the Vedda, and special names were given to these pets. 231 552

The Veddas appeared to have no knowledge of melting iron for the manufacture of their particular implements, which consisted of the bow and arrow, the spear, and the small axe, or hatchet. Arrow and spear-heads were procured by barter; the method of procedure was to clear a small space round the foot of a tree by the wayside leading to a village known to contain smiths. Here the Vedda would hang up to the branch of a tree a vessel containing honey, or a piece of meat, which would be taken by the smith, who in return would hang up an arrow-head. 411 412 326 439

It was understood by both that the quantity or number of articles required would be represented by the number of parcels of meat or honey. Should the smith, however, take the meat and not leave the arrow-heads that were thus silently requisitioned, he would pay the penalty with his life, or some of his animals would be shot by the defrauded Vedda. [628]

The bow was usually made from the wood of the Dunumadala (*Stereospermum chelonioides*) and of the Bignoniaceæ. It was not always of the same length, as this appears to have depended on the springiness of the wood. The arrow was generally about 4 ft. long, or as much as a man could draw the bow to. The arrow-head appears to have been small, large arrow-heads being for ceremonial purposes only. 411 [824]

Fire was obtained by spinning, under moderate pressure, a vertical rod of Welanga wood (*Pterospermum suberifolium*) on a flat piece of wood of the same species, with the point of the former surrounded by floss, or some quickly inflammable material. Later, the flint and steel were found more effective. One example of a flint and steel was shown to me at Panawa, and I tried to purchase it at the owner's valuation, but I found he was most reluctant to sell. I understood that the flint and steel, a lock of hair, and a fragment of cloth represented a title deed, these being given by a dying man to his heir, or adopted heir, as a mode or evidence of transfer. 372 [824] 423 428

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

423 But what irony is all this talk of chiefs and clans and possessions, where
656 only a mere handful of spiritless people is concerned. The Veddas alone recognise their boundaries, Government does not. Quite rightly they are not permitted to fell their forests without sanction, or to give their lands away; for what would be easier than to cozen such simple folk. These Veddas may cultivate *chenas* with permission from Government but without tax; a privilege they are impotent to avail themselves of, and are still hunters enough to disregard, whether under encouragement or compulsion. "What lands have the Veddas now?" lamented Kaurala. "Our rightful lands! Why should we be deprived of them? The earth of our land is honey to us". And in those words he spoke the doom of his race.

Let us leave the last of the Veddas alone, and not try to fashion them to our ways; for that would kill them the sooner. Let them die out, scattered in their lonely jungles, the hunters they have always been. A few decades hence and the Vedda will be but a name.

● 651 Not every Vedda is exempt from taxation. I believe those in the Eastern Province are taxed, while those of Uva are not. Why this distinction, it is hard to understand; except for the plea that nowadays it is difficult to say who is a Vedda and who not. But, in cases of doubt, the conditions of life that characterise a particular community should be the criterion that influences the decision, favourably or otherwise. It does seem hard that these poor people, who never handle a single cent from one year's end to another, and have barely a rag with which to cover their nakedness, should have to pay a tax of two rupees with the richest in the land! In default of payment, a penalty of some ten days' work on the roads is imposed; an equitable provision on the face of it; but what of the family with the bread-winner thus engaged? After all, these people only live from day to day; and even sickness very often means starvation.

241 As for *chena* cultivation,* there can be little doubt that it is the one form
311 of agriculture, best suited to the primitive folk of the arid forests; but a
656 serious attempt should be made to better the wasteful methods now in vogue. I remember once travelling through a Province where a progressive, but misguided policy—as applied to these parts—prevailed: *chena* licences had been with-held that year with a view to enforcing paddy cultivation; (in such forests! and among such folk!). The result was disastrous. It was heart-rending to see the starved, emaciated villagers
261 Sinhalese and Veddas alike, digging out wild, unsavoury yams from the baked ground. They would have given their lives for a little *kurrukkan* or maize, which was nowhere to be had.

Chenas represent a very primitive and wasteful form of agriculture. In June of each year an area of jungle is leased by several families. The trees are felled, and burnt two weeks later. The land is then cleared, except for a residue of charred trunks. Temporary huts are suitably disposed, and the whole surrounded by a fence-work of burnt logs, so strong that it must be proof against elephants, so tall that it must top the sambur's leap, so close that it must keep out the hare. By August this work is completed.

In September the crops are sown:—Maize or *iriṇdu* which takes 4 months, and manioc which takes a year to mature; vegetables such as pumpkins, melons and beans (*pukul, wattaka, ihimbiri, kahiri, leema*); yams such as *kukul-alla, wal-alla, watapol, kodol*. In October and November, *kurrukkan*, chillies, green-gram, and perhaps a little paddy is planted.

During February, March, and April the *kurrukkan* and maize crops are harvested—or rather what is left of them when the elephants and drought have had their say